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ALUM, FOUNDER OF GIRLS SCHOOL IN AFGHANISTAN, SHARES STORY OF ESCAPE

By SOPHIA McDERMOTT-HUGHES
Editor at Large

SOPHIA McDERMOTT-HUGHES/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
President Laurie Patton and Shabana Basij-Rasikh '11 discuss the future of the School of Leadership, Afghanistan.

"Come to the airport with a purse or backpack. You have 30 minutes," Shabana Basij-Rasikh '11 told nine graduates of the School of Leadership, Afghanistan (SOLA), the school she founded in 2008.

Of the school's 95 current students, 92 accompanied Basij-Rasikh and those nine graduates to flee Afghanistan in August, just before the U.S. withdrawal and Taliban takeover. Soon, those nine will come to Middlebury to continue their college educations over the next four years, Basij-Rasikh announced in a Critical Conversations talk with President Laurie Patton on Saturday.

The students and teachers at SOLA, the first and only girls boarding school in Afghanistan, risked, in all likelihood, being targeted as the Taliban advanced toward Kabul. Their escape was cloaked in secrecy for their protection, but also for the good of those left behind. Basij-Rasikh knew what signal it would send to people if the only girls boarding school left Afghanistan. She didn't want to destroy the hope of those who did not have a way out of the country.

> "What troubled me the most was that girls, especially girls in Afghanistan, did not have access to quality education. And I saw it as a responsibility, as a moral obligation, to do something about it."

Basij-Rasikh's goal has always been to serve her country. She came to the U.S. for her last year of high school before enrolling at Middlebury. Between college classes that left her feeling overwhelmed and wildly out of place, she worked with an American retiree in Afghanistan to found SOLA in 2008. On weekends, she went on fundraising trips, somehow managing to balance her responsibilities back home with her women and gender studies and international studies homework.

Basij-Rasikh knows the value of an education. Born and raised in Taliban-controlled Kabul, she dressed as a boy and attended school in secret, since women were forbidden from receiving an education. But her parents were committed to her education.

"My father would say, 'You can lose everything you own in your life. Your money can be stolen. But the one thing that will always remain with you is what is in here.' And he would point to his head. 'Your education is the biggest investment in your life,' he would say. 'Don't ever regret it,'" Basij-Rasikh wrote on SOLA's website.

From a young age, her parents had drilled into her that the purpose of education was to serve people in need, and she was determined to return to Afghanistan to put hers to use.

"What troubled me the most was that girls, especially girls in Afghanistan, did not have access to quality education," she said. "And I saw it as a responsibility, as a moral obligation, to do something about it."

Basij-Rasikh returned to Afghanistan after graduating in 2011, the same year that the Obama Administration announced plans to withdraw from the country. People thought she was crazy for going back and starting a school in an active war zone and a seemingly-doomed country, but that did not deter her.

SOLA began as a high school, but it soon became apparent that the gaps in rural education before ninth grade made catch-up nearly impossible for many girls. The school admitted their first cohort of sixth grade girls in 2016 and have admitted a class every year since, steadily growing over time. The girls come from all over the country and all different ethnic groups, representing 28 of the 34 provinces.

One purpose of the school is to

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With room freeze lifted, students try to move out of Bread Loaf

By KATIE FUTTERMAN
Community Council Correspondent

Sixty-five students began the semester living at Bread Loaf, but several have successfully moved out in recent weeks due to rooms opening up on campus or due to ADA accommodations.

The college is housing undergraduates at the Bread Loaf campus for the first time to accommodate more than 300 extra students enrolled at the college this fall. ResLife has stressed that moving rooms — typically something available to students due to conflicts with roommates or other needs — will be extremely limited this semester, with priority given to students with ADA/Title IX accommodations and then to students living at Bread Loaf or the Middlebury Courtyard by Marriott.

In an email to The Campus, AJ Place, associate dean for student life, said ResLife works closely with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) before and during the room draw to ensure that students who need housing accommodations get them.

If students are experiencing trouble in their rooms, Place said that students should contact their RA or RD. If they reach out to ResLife directly, that is usually where they are pointed. If there is an immediate concern, Place advises reaching out to Public Safety. They should be in touch with different offices for support such as the Civil Rights and Title IX office or the DRC as needed.

There was a room freeze in place during the first weeks of the

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ARTS & CULTURE

(Not so) special interest houses

As over-enrollment pressures college to fill every room on campus, spaces in language houses and other special interest houses become a part of regular room draw

By SYLVIE LYU
Contributing Writer

A unique part of the Middlebury experience is the opportunity to live in an academic or special interest house where students pursue a common interest and share it with the campus community. These include 10 language houses, the Queer Studies House, Self-Reliance and InSite, as well as special interest houses where residents try out food recipes, experience spiritual traditions or pursue mindful and healthy living.

"We watched a lot of Soviet cartoons, and we did a lot of cooking," Julian Gonzales-Poirier '23, a resident of the Russian House, said.

Having lived at the Russian House for his entire sophomore year, Gonzales-Poirier considers his experience as a mini-study abroad, during which he boosted his language skills and familiarized himself with Russian culture. Quinn Rifkin '22, who has just begun his semester at the Italian House, hopes to immerse himself in the Italian language by chatting with his peers and the teaching assistant.

However, due to over-enrollment this fall, these special communities are starting to change. As the housing problem intensified, the school decided to re-appropriate some interest housing spaces for students without the shared interest.

"Our top priority has been to provide an in-person educational experience to all active students who wish to be at Middlebury this fall," A.J. Place, associate dean of students, said. "We needed to be creative in using all available space possible, including any open space in interest houses."

Currently, there are 301 students living in interest houses. Fifteen spaces in special housing were cycled into the August room draw, including eight from the Community Engagement House at 48 South Street. The Arabic House, where ideally five students sign the language pledge to speak only Arabic, now accommodates two Arabic speakers and three non-speakers.

Hazel Traw '24, one of the two Arabic speakers in the house, has been studying Arabic for four years. She considers the language house an opportunity to practice using the language in casual settings. For Traw, the arrival of non-Arabic speakers came as a surprise. The Residential Life staff did not communicate in advance with her and the other Arabic speaker about the non-speakers, so they only realized what was going on at the first house meeting

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ARTS & CULTURE

'MAKERSPACE' FOR SEWING AND SUSTAINABLE FASHION UNVEILED

By MAGGIE REYNOLDS
Local Editor

DALEELAH SALEH/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Molly Grazioso '23.5 spent the summer renovating a room in The Annex to become a makerspace for students on campus, known as The Studio.

Molly Grazioso '23.5 spent the final months of this past summer renovating a room in The Annex to become a makerspace for sewing and clothing upcycling projects. The space opened for the first time this past Saturday, Oct. 2.

Grazioso got the idea for The Studio, as she is calling the room, when she began taking classes in the art and architecture departments at Middlebury.

"I felt like I wasn't getting exactly what I wanted, which was to study clothing," she said.

In the fall of 2020, Grazioso applied for the Social Entrepreneurship Fellowship through the Innovation Hub.

"On my application [I] explained that I wanted to pursue sustainable fashion very generally," Grazioso said. "[I wanted to create a space for] upcycling or other sustainable fashion projects."

Later that fall, Grazioso, along with eight to 10 other sophomores and sophomore Febs, was awarded the $7,000 fellowship, to be used over the next three years. It was not until this past June, though, that Grazioso began serious conversations with the Innovation Hub about possible locations to house her makerspace.

The Innovation Hub's Old Stone Mill Program is an initiative where Middlebury students can become tenants of The Annex (located across from the townhouses) or 82 Weybridge Street to pursue their projects. Grazioso was able to tour one of the upstairs rooms in The Annex this summer. "It was exactly what I was looking for," she said.

After Grazioso had selected the room in The Annex for the upcycling studio, she set an ambitious opening goal: the beginning of the fall 2021 semester. In order to reach that goal, she began working extra hours around her CCE Privilege and Poverty Internship to clean up and paint the space. "When I came in, [the] space hadn't been utilized for a long time, so there was a lot of work to do," she said.

Along with preparing the space for students to sew and embroider in, Grazioso had to work on setting up the machines and placing fabric orders. Though she is still in the process of acquiring supplies, Grazioso said she has gotten most of her materials from second hand stores, estate sales and donations from Middlebury residents.

"The space is open, but I definitely wouldn't consider it finished," Grazioso added. "The easiest thing to work on right now is a 'slow fashion project,' like embroidering jeans you already have."

In addition to the advice she

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Fall family weekend approaches, other visitors still barred from campus

By CARLY McADAM
Contributing Writer

Although families will begin arriving at Middlebury this weekend, the college's Covid-19 guidelines for the fall semester still prohibit students from hosting visitors. Sports recruits, prospective students, and family members arriving for Fall Family Weekend are allowed on campus, as well as approved speakers and performers. The school has set vaccination requirements and safety procedures for approved visitors.

In an email to students on Aug. 13, Chief Health Officer and College Physician Mark Peluso and Vice President for Student Affairs Smita Ruzicka wrote that "visitors are [only] allowed on campus with departmental permission and for approved events or programs."

According to the same email, all visitors are required to have received the Covid-19 vaccine unless they have a valid religious or medical exemption and continue to wear face coverings indoors.

The college considers Fall Family Weekend a sanctioned school event and will welcome families from across the country on Oct. 8 to 10. Chief Health Officer Mark Peluso and Dean of Students Derek Doucet said Fall Family Weekend, admissions tours and recruiting trips should be handled differently from unapproved visitors hosted by students on campus.

While Fall Family Weekend activities will also take place outdoors whenever possible, campus buildings, including residential halls, will still be open to families.

"Fall Family Weekend, campus tours and athletic activities are all organized events with specific oversight and mitigation measures in place, and coordinated through various departments on campus. This is different from other guests visiting campus," Peluso and Doucet wrote in an email to The Campus.

Student guests often stay overnight in dorms or other college housing, which increases risk of Covid-19 transmission, according to Peluso and Doucet.

"This is among the primary reasons we have made a distinction between organized events and student visitors in our policies," they said.

This fall, sports teams are also permitted to invite prospective athletes to campus for in-person recruiting visits, but recruits are not approved to stay overnight. The athletics department continues to monitor the status of Covid-19 cases and is taking precautions to prevent the spread of the virus.

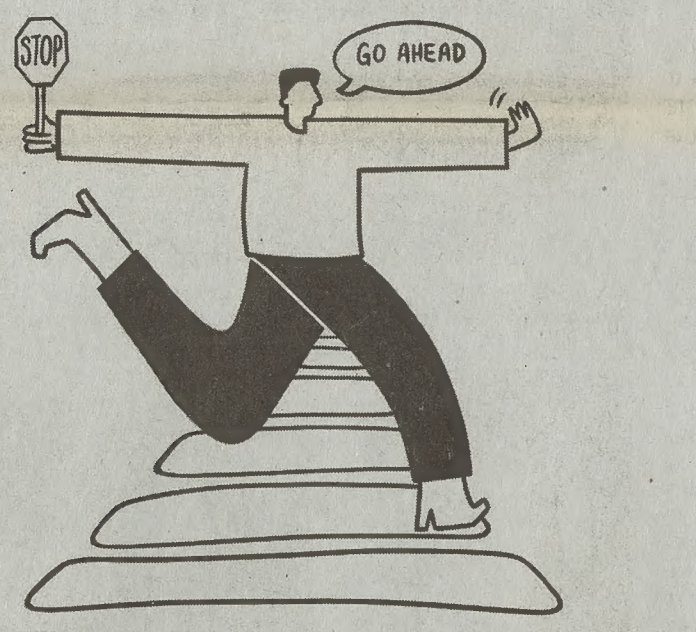
"The Athletics Department organizes and manages their visits and there is a process for allowing [prospective athletes] on campus," Peluso and Doucet said. "Prospective student athletes are only on campus briefly and do not stay overnight."

Peluso and Doucet also said that it is appropriate for certain special guests to be allowed on campus for approved events at this time.

"Experts who give lectures or participate in panels, guest speakers who visit a class, and performers are just some of the guests who take part in approved events or programs," they said. "Their presence enhances the educational experience of our students."

Peluso feels that the Delta variant and the fact that children under 12 are not able to be vaccinated still warrant a cautious approach to Covid-19 guidelines at this time.

"As we transition from a pandemic situation to a more endemic situation, we expect mitigation measures to loosen even further, but it is not an on-off switch," Peluso said. "We are still actively managing visitors, events and other situations."



Pia Contreras

CCI and CCE move to new locations in Kitchel and Blinn Lane

Courtesy Photo

Kitchel House, across from Twilight Hall, is the new home of the Center for Careers and Internships.

By BEN WAGNER
Contributing Writer

The Center for Careers and Internships (CCI) and Center for Community Engagement (CCE) have moved to new offices in Kitchel House and 26 Blinn Lane, respectively.

Adirondack House and DKE, where the CCI and CCE were previously housed, were converted to student housing in fall 2020 to spread students out and accommodate additional on-campus students due to the cancelation of study abroad programs. Staff in both offices spent much of the year working remotely, with some on-campus meetings.

With record enrollment this fall, the college kept converted houses as residential spaces and moved the CCE, CCI and Innovation Hub to new locations. According to the CCI's Executive Director Peggy Burns, every non-academic department based in a house has shifted locations.

The CCI — the largest of the three — moved to Kitchel because it was the largest available location. The CCE and the Innovation Hub are now both located on Blinn Lane, in houses that had previously served as Commons Head houses. The Scott Center for Spiritual and Religious Life also moved from its house next to the admissions office to 46 South Street.

Compared to Adirondack House, Kitchel has limited space and is less connected to campus.

"We had spent four or five years, you know, really cultivating our brand [at the Adirondack House]," Burns said. "Moving to Kitchel House was a net loss of 11 spaces."

The change has required some creative thinking, such as shared offices, shifting some artistic career advising to the Mahaney Arts Center and using the Twilight Auditorium as a meeting space for larger CCI events.

It has been a challenge, but according to Burns, the staff has been able to adapt.

Health professions and science advisors also moved out of the CCI and joined the Center for Teaching, Learning and Research (CTLR).

"That was a strategic decision," Burns said, "feeling that it aligned better with professional advising. That actually was the model maybe eight years ago."

Last year, the CCI was temporarily located within the 75 Shannon Street building — an undesirable location due to its lack of ideal space for individual meetings, which have long been a hallmark of CCI's work.

"It was a decision made in the throes of Covid and where decisions were being made quickly," Burns said.

The home of CCI for thirty years was the Adirondack House, a space that felt cozy and comforting to Burns and her staff. For Burns, it was "the student byway where [she] got to see all of the fun stuff that was happening."

Kitchel house, located across from Twilight Hall, is on the periphery of campus. Despite this, Ursula Olender, director of career advising and employer relations at the CCI, said that more students have been in the area than she expected. Burns and Olender both noted that Kitchel house is not as far from most campus buildings as it may seem — a mere four-minute walk from the Davis Library, according to Google Maps — they emphasized their commitment and willingness to adapt programming to meet the needs of students.

Olender said that if requested, peer and staff advisers could meet with students at other locations on campus. Peer advisors already hold evening quick questions hours in the Anderson Freeman Center and virtually. According to Olender, student consultations and visits with the CCI are similar to fall 2019 levels.

Students who do find themselves at Kitchel House are on the edge of town, which the center is leveraging to foster engagement between students and the town of Middlebury. In an ideal world, Burns said, students would stop by the CCI on their way to and from engaging with the people and economy of Middlebury.

Virtual engagement has also been a part of the CCI's toolbelt for many years, making their services accessible to students studying abroad even before the pandemic. Burns said virtual meetings can be useful for students to hone their communication skills on-camera.

Olender also said that while virtual visits worked, CCI staff prefers — especially for first consultations — to meet with students face-to-face.

"We'd love to meet students in person, and we also think it kind of contributes to their abilities to articulate their goals," said Olender. "In-person contact has been very important to students, who for so long could only interact with advisors and mentors online."

While Kitchell House initially felt new, according to Olender, the paint color is slowly growing on everyone. And old traditions like the CCI's annual cider and doughnuts — happening Oct. 7 on the Kitchel House lawn at 3:30 p.m. — have made the trip to the center's new home.

ALUM RETURNS TO TALK ABOUT WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

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address years of ethnic tension and violence in the country by pairing girls with roommates and mentors from different ethnic groups and encouraging intermingling. It was always Basij-Rasikh's hope that the school would one day host students from every province so the girls would return home and teach their communities what they had learned about tolerance.

Many students attend the school for free, but those who can make a symbolic contribution to the cost as a way of ensuring their commitment to their daughter's education.

"It comes, unfortunately, as a surprise for a lot of American audiences when I say that families across Afghanistan crave great educational opportunities for their children," Basij-Rasikh said. "At the end of the day there are so many things universal about parenting, including wanting great opportunities for your children."

Basij-Rasikh recalled one father coming to her to pay his daughter's school fee. He pulled out a carefully tied handkerchief from his pocket, filled with small bills he'd painstakingly collected throughout the year for his contribution by waiting on the corner of the street each morning to be hired for his day job.

"I had this feeling of wanting to return the money to him, but I knew I would shatter his pride; I couldn't do that," she said. "His daughter is the first person — not the first woman but the first person — in his family to receive an education. . . he knew very deeply the importance of his daughter's education."

The first cohort of sixth graders that matriculated in 2016 was in 11th grade and would have graduated in 2022, a year Basij-Rasikh could not mention without tearing up at the thought of what could have been.

When Biden announced on April 14 that U.S. troops would withdraw from Afghanistan by Sept. 11, Basij-Rasikh knew that a Taliban takeover was only a matter of time. She knew, too, that her work at SOLA put her, and all of the other staff members, teachers and their families at risk.

By mid-July, the Taliban advance already endangered the lives of SOLA's students. In an opinion piece published in the Washington Post, Basij-Rasikh wrote about two girls whose grandmother handed them scythes and told them to prepare themselves.

"She told them that if Taliban fighters ever came to the house, the girls must be swift. There would be no time to hesitate," Basij-Rasikh wrote. "If the Taliban comes into this house, she said, use these scythes to kill yourselves. The girls promised that they would."

Basij-Rasikh burnt the academic records of all of her students, not to erase them, but to protect them and their families. She knew she couldn't stay in Afghanistan, but she also couldn't abandon her students and ask them to forfeit the futures they had spent all these years building against all odds.

After approaching many neighboring countries for help, they decided to take the president of Rwanda's offer to host a study abroad semester in Kigali, the capital. She didn't know if the families would trust her with their daughters, but almost all of them did.

"The majority of these families couldn't put Rwanda on the map. Some of them didn't even know how to pronounce the country, but they sent their daughters," she said. "I don't know if I would make the same kind of decision, I don't know if you would make that kind of decision. When there's war, when there's so much more increased uncertainty, how do you let one of your children go?"

Soon it became apparent that they would have to be there for more than the semester. On Sept. 17, the Taliban announced that high schools across the country could reopen for boys only, effectively banning girls from secondary education.

> When there's war, when there's so much more increased uncertainty, how do you let one of your children go?"

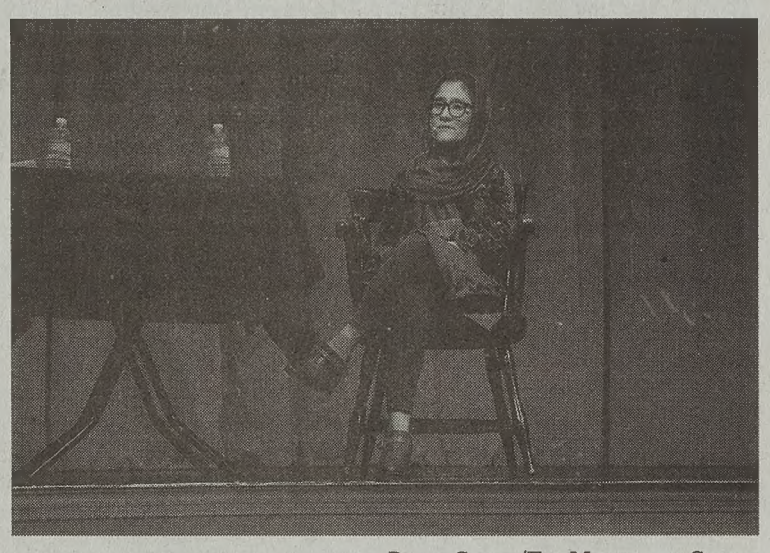


Photo Credit/The Middlebury Campus

Caption.

"If there is one group that understands the value of girls' education more than any one of us, it is the terrorists," Basij-Rasikh said. "They are so fixated on preventing girls from accessing education. And I wish our policy makers and influencers of the world understood this as much as they do because we wouldn't be where we are today."

For now, Basij-Rasikh has had to give up her dream of graduating the first cohort of students from SOLA in 2022, realizing that pushing forward with that goal would be selfish given the circumstances. Instead, SOLA is sending 42 students to boarding schools across the U.S.

The remaining students will continue at SOLA's new Kigali campus, and the school plans to fill the open spots with young, female refugees without access to education until the day they can return to Afghanistan. The space in Kigali is actually larger than the school in Afghanistan, so SOLA will be able to take in double their earlier population.

Rwanda, as a post-genocidal society, offers a unique hope to the students and opportunities to learn about forgiveness, reconciliation and how to build back a country from violence and destruction. The Rwandan government has also given the school two nurses and two doctors for around-the-clock care and access to trauma counselors.

Basij-Rasikh has not given up hope, and eagerly awaits the day she and SOLA can return to Afghanistan, her home and the country to which she has dedicated her

CLUB SPORTS AND STUDENT ORGS NAVIGATE RETURN TO COMPETITION AND NEW COVID-19 GUIDELINES

By RACHEL LU
Staff Writer

The Student Activities Office emailed student organization leaders last week with updated information about college-sanctioned travel guidelines, including new restrictions on lodging intended to mitigate Covid-19 risks.

These standards have the greatest impact on club sports, which resumed competition and travel for the fall season but are not supervised as closely as varsity sports. Other student organizations that travel for competitions or overnight trips are subject to the same guidelines.

The new guidelines require student organization leaders to submit a travel request for each overnight trip. These requests, which are processed by the student organization liaison, can take up to three days. Overnight accommodations must be official lodging establishments such as hotels, and there is a strict capacity limit of two students per room.

While varsity athletes are tested every Monday, there is no required testing for traveling club sports teams. There are a limited number of testing slots available through the college's weekly asymptomatic testing program in Virtue Field House.

Lily Shannon '23, president of the women's club rugby team, expressed their personal anxiety about traveling for competition and the college's insufficient plan to address that risk.

> "We are playing a contact sport; we are outside, but it is hard to stay distanced. Since we aren't getting regularly tested, none of us really know what's going on. I fully trust my teammates, but it would be nice if we could have more peace of mind."

The rugby team's season has returned to its normal schedule of tournaments, which includes traveling for half of their games. Masks are required during gameplay, but Shannon still feels uneasy about the risks involved in competing.

"We are playing a contact sport; we are outside, but it is hard to stay distanced. Since we aren't getting regularly tested, none of us really know what's going on. I fully trust my teammates, but it would be nice if we could have more peace of mind," Shannon said.

As the president of the team, Shannon has encouraged their teammates to sign up for asymptomatic testing, especially after longer travel weekends.

"If it were up to me, we would all be tested weekly regardless of athlete status or not, but the fact that we are still traveling out of state and not offered tests is a little concerning," Shannon said.

Marco Fengler '23, president of the co-ed club soccer team, believes the current guidelines are appropriate for traveling sports teams. Although the team remains cautious about Covid-19, Fengler believes the health risks and exposure are low because the majority of the campus population has been vaccinated.

"The college recently reported a significantly low Covid incidence rate, which gives us comfort in holding normal practices," he said.

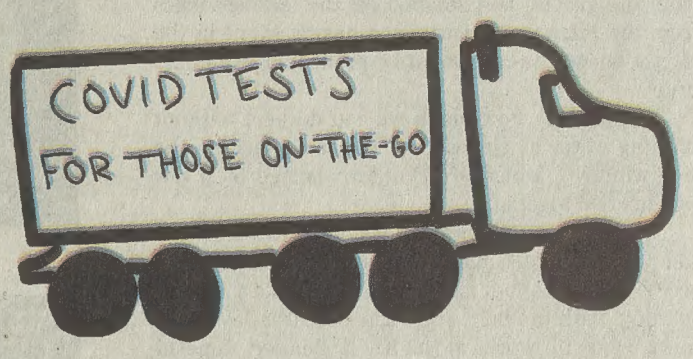
Fengler said that the wellness of his teammates is always a priority and that the team emphasizes safe playing conditions and injury prevention at each practice.

The club soccer team has 180 members, although most players do not attend all practices and only a small group of players travel to tournaments. Last week, the team traveled to Boston, a trip that complied with the current Covid-19 guidelines because the city falls within a 500-mile radius from campus.

The men's and women's Pranksters frisbee team competed in a tournament at Williams College this past weekend. The game was played on an outside field and every player was required to provide proof of vaccination. With such mitigation guidelines in place, Rae Zeller '22, captain of the women's team, told The Campus that health risks were not a major concern at the tournament.

However, Zeller felt it was disappointing that the college did not have other safety precautions in place for when club players return to campus, instead relying on team captains to take the initiative to encourage testing.

"We did recommend everyone get a test this week and directed them to the free Vermont Health Department asymptomatic testing in town," said Zeller. "It was also disappointing that this was something we did on our own, and it wasn't recommended in any communication to club sports that we've been getting from the school."



Sabrina Templeton

While varsity athletes are required to be tested every Monday, club sports teams traveling the same weekends are not tested by the college.

With room freeze lifted, students try to move out of Bread Loaf

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semester, when students were unable to move to new residences. With the freeze lifted, many students living at Bread Loaf have sought opportunities to move onto campus — and some have been successful.

When Liv Cohen '23.5 and Lily Kanady '23.5 first were assigned rooms in Bread Loaf over the summer, they were stunned. Dean of Students Derek Doucet told them that there were rooms on campus that they had reserved, initially, but would be available in the August draw. They withdrew from their original housing placement and went into the August draw, but Bread Loaf housing was their only option and they were ultimately assigned to smaller rooms at Bread Loaf.

Kanady had been emailing the school ever since the people she was living with over the summer got some of the last rooms on campus four hours before her slot, and she realized she would probably end up at Breadloaf or the Marriott. She also reached out to her therapist when she got the room draw in August and asked if they could reach out to the school. Then she decided to try to wait it out.

On Friday, Sept. 24, Kanady and Cohen were able to move to the Chateau.

"It was like the biggest relief," Cohen said.

They lost the incentives offered to students living at Bread Loaf, including the reduced room and board rate, though they still have discounted room and board from the weeks that they did live at Bread Loaf.

Even though Middlebury always has reserved ADA rooms, students using accommodations still feared pushback from their peers for utilizing the resource.

> "I was just so taken aback by the feeling of isolation."

"It's tough because you have to put yourself in a position of evaluating how dire your situation is," Kanady said. "It's like, I'm really affected day to day by living at Bread Loaf, and it causes me a lot of stress and anxiety. But then it's almost like you gaslight yourself and it's like, well, is it really that bad? And it is. It sucks."

Cohen and Kanady tried to remain positive about the half price for room and board, the shuttle service and the fact that some other people they knew were living in their hall.

Yet on move-in day, Cohen saw only two students and reality began to set in. Instead of the usual hustle and bustle, it was silent.

"I was just so taken aback by the feeling of isolation," Kanady said.

On weekends, Cohen and Kanady had to coordinate their schedule with the shuttle. Once, Cohen got to the shuttle at 1:30 a.m. and waited until 2 a.m thinking the shuttle was coming late, until realizing it had left ten minutes early, at 1:20 a.m. Another night, the shuttle was so full that people who lived in the Marriott in town had to walk home.

> "I think there are amazing parts of Bread Loaf, and for people that can make it work, it's awesome... But I'm unorganized, very spontaneous, I make all my plans spur of the moment, it just was not working for me."

Cohen said that planning her day became "mental gymnastics." She felt the loss of little things, such as being able to lie in her bed between classes and changing clothes, as well as losing time coordinating trips back and forth.

"That's when it really started setting in that I would have a very different college experience than everyone else," Cohen said.

When Cohen talked to Katie Burns, her residence director, she was told that there was nothing she could do in those first two weeks. There was, however, a good chance that she would be able to move after the two week room freeze, as many people who had wanted to get out of Bread Loaf had already been able to do by moving to the Marriott or Inn on the Green. Burns told her to talk to her dean, who then told her to talk to her RD. Cohen said she mostly got passed from person to person.

Kanady confirmed with her therapist that she needed her to talk to the school. She also sent emails of her own to Place, ADA Coordinator Jodi Litchfield, Doucet and ResLife. Kanady said she did not know who would help her.

According to Kanady, the school offered her resources and told her to talk to her dean.

"Living in a community always brings up different values and perspectives and it is important to try to work through conflicts," Place said. "It's for this reason that we encourage all students to have open and honest discussions with their roommates(s) about their living styles."

Kanady said they avoided her questions.

"They just scoot by them, and they don't really answer them, and don't really do anything about it, but just offer circular answers where it's just like, 'please be complacent, please god, just chill out,' instead of actually helping. I just feel like they don't care, and it's really frustrating because I love this place so much, and it's really disheartening," Kanady said.

Kanady went to Litchfield's office herself.

"'Hey, I'm Lily," Kanady emailed Litchifield. "I've been emailing you about Bread Loaf, I haven't gotten a response. I don't know if you're super busy, or if it got lost in just everyday life which is totally fine, but I just wanted to come and introduce myself because I need to get out of there."

Kanady ultimately got in touch with Litchfield, who said that if she responded to that email indicating that she wanted a room on campus, ResLife could find a room for her within 24 hours.

Kanady was initially looking for a double for her and Cohen. The school said that they had a double at Inn on the Green, an off-campus option for students where students still pay the full cost of room and board, or a single in Lang, which Kanady called stifling. She asked for the weekend to think about it, and if there were any other spaces on campus besides Lang. Litchfield followed up after the weekend saying there were two singles on the same floor in the Chateau.

Now that she lives in the Chateau, Cohen says she can feel the college vibe again. She hears people outside and can text her friends for dinner within a five minute walk.

Kanady said the situation put her in a moral bind, as she knew that other people might need housing for their own emergencies, but that she ultimately took the opportunity.

"I think there are amazing parts of Bread Loaf, and for people that can make it work, it's awesome. If you're organized and you don't mind driving and you like quiet and you're like a planned person, it totally works," Cohen said. "But I'm unorganized, very spontaneous, I make all my plans spur of the moment, it just was not working for me."

Sam Lipin/The Middlebury Campus

Most students living on the Bread Loaf campus are housed in the Bread Loaf Inn (top).

Honey and Harvest at the Knoll

By FLORENCE WU
Local Editor

For me, the solar panels mark the threshold between the campus and the Knoll, Middlebury's organic farm. It's the toll gate cutting off the retreat from the midterm craze. I walk past the dark, orderly panels and set my mind off of academics for the next few hours.

During harvest season, you can smell the farm before you see it. After a night of rain, it had a gentle mix of grass, dirt and honey that rose out of the earth with the morning sun. It was hawk migration season — the birds circled overhead, smoothly, under a cloud-filled sky.

The farm was quiet on a Friday morning whenMegan Brakeley'06, the food and garden educator at the farm, stepped out from her car and greeted me. She was wearing a faded pink jacket with hearts sewn into the front pocket and jeans patched up at the knees.

I was struck by her laughter and the joy it carried — Megan spends more time laughing than not. Almost immediately, she appeared to me as someone who is not merely content but sincerely happy and grateful with where she's found herself in life.

Megan started working almost immediately and did not stop until sunset. She picked up a beer can from the ground and scraped off the leftover ashes from the pizza oven. There is a baking event in the afternoon, so the oven must be preheated two hours prior.

"It's amazing how much we can do here without running water or electricity," she said, opening the side windows, which are counterbalanced by a few weights tied together.

The farm started with the vision of two students who wanted a place open enough to the campus to be accessible by foot but far enough to feel like a retreat. In 2003, with the help of garden educator Jay Leshinsky, who still works at the Knoll, Bennett Konesni '04.5 and Jean Hamilton '04.5 started building the shed, the solar panels and the well.

"Back when they were envisioning this farm, I had some connection and access to college funds," Jay said. "So, I did what I could to help." Now, almost ten years later, Jay still volunteers regularly at the farm, helping with gardening tasks as well as running classes there.

When I first met him, he pointed to a huge zucchini and winked. "The one that got away," he said.

Megan grew up between Alabama and Pittsburgh. She graduated from Middlebury with a major in Spanish and a minor in environmental studies. Although she never anticipated returning to the college after graduation, Megan found her way back after meeting her spouse, who lives in the town of Middlebury.

"There is a gravity at Middlebury that brings people back," she said. "Traditional farming in the U.S. has a very on-the-grind, go-hard culture. It can be very stressful and I wasn't sure if that's what I wanted. But I love my job [at the Knoll]. Every time I come to work, I am amazed that I get to do this."

She currently lives in town with her husband and two children and is very grateful for being able to have a home in Middlebury. She said she would not have been able to afford a home here if not for the fact that her spouse's family lived their whole lives here and have local connections. The already expensive market in Middlebury was made worse by the severe housing shortage during Covid-19.

"It is very hard to get your foot into Middlebury, whether it's the town or the college," Megan said. "We are very lucky. You hear students complain about living in Marriott, or Bread Loaf. I think there is a real... disconnect here [between the student and the local population]."

After firing up the pizza oven, we met up with Jeannie Bartlett '15, who was leading an experiment on carrots with a group of students. The activity was a part of an environmental studies course.

The group watched Megan demonstrate how to dig out a carrot. "It's as much about the soil as it is about the carrot," she said. "I think about it as asking the carrot for permission to extract it. If it's not willing to come out, listen to it and don't force it, or you will break it."

The group spaced themselves and extracted orange and purple carrots from the earth. They are then categorized into first and second grade, with first grade being more commercially desirable produce that will go straight to the market.

Back at the oven, we chopped up the carrots and roasted them with honey. The purple carrots tasted like a mixture of carrots and sweet potatoes. Compared to the orange ones, the purple carrots have more variation and forking, along with a different nutrition profile.

Continued on Page 12

The farm on a quiet Friday morning, before the start of all the events.

Megan Brakeley '06, food and garden educator at the Knoll.

"There's a gravity at Middlebury that brings people back. I love my job [at the Knoll]. Every time I come to work, I am amazed that I get to do this"

Megan and Ana, a Campus photojournalist, opening the pizza oven shed's window together.

A power drill and dried plant decorations in the shed.

Megan bringing out a bucket for skunk beans.

Megan pre-heating the oven.

Jay returning the gardening tools to the shed after class.

A forgotten, overgrown zucchini that Jay pointed out to me.

"Pandemic Pivot": 11th Hour's new spa-cafe concept combines coffee calm, and CBD

By OLIVIA MUELLER
Arts and Culture Editor

Tucked away in the middle of the Marbleworks, 11th Hour Botanical Wellness is a hidden gem. It is a cozy but quirky space with a lot going on; colorful Nicaraguan art lines the walls of the espresso bar area, and there is a spa section near the main windows displaying botanical skincare products. However, looking more closely at wares housed in the round-top display case reveals yet another aspect of the business –– CBD tinctures, edibles, and yes, (THC-free) joints. Passersby may wonder: what exactly is going on here at this "spa-fé?"

"This is my pandemic pivot," explained owner Jenn Buker from behind the espresso bar in her newly refurbished space.

A marine-biologist-turned-aesthetician, Buker formerly operated Pro Skin Studio, the popular spa and skincare side of her business, out of the same space.

"I was the person that would have people book [appointments] a year in advance, because if you want to guarantee a spot then you need to," Buker said.

Then, when the pandemic hit, she made the difficult decision to temporarily close due to the risk of offering in-person services. The time off gave her an unexpected opportunity to branch out into other business ventures, including growing hemp for CBD products at her Lincoln, Vt. home.

Buker met fellow Lincoln residents and experienced hemp farmers Erica French and Todd Curtis around Memorial Day of 2020 and worked with them to grow her first seedlings. While Memorial Day is a typical planting time, due to the timing of only recently befriending French and Curtis, Buker did not get her plants into the ground until July — truly the eleventh hour for planting, and hence, the name of her new business was born.

> Passerby may wonder: what exactly is going on here at this "spa-fé?"

"We had some of [the cannabis] turned into our [CBD] tincture," Buker said. "And the guys that processed the tincture for us were like, I've never seen anything this good."

Although she is not a smoker or consumer of THC cannabis products, Buker has been using CBD products for years as a means of managing chronic pain caused by a connective tissue disorder. Knowing she had a quality product on her hands that was safe to sell during a pandemic, Buker decided to expand her business model. Thus, out of Pro Skin Studio, 11th Hour Botanical Wellness was founded.

> "It was just this very organic thing that happened"

"It was just this very organic thing that happened," Buker said.

When the Bristol coffee shop Almost Home closed last year, Buker was able to purchase a lot of their espresso equipment. She now serves local espresso from Earthback Coffee Roasters, a small-batch Vermont roaster, as well as CBD-infused blends from the Colorado-based brand Strava. The café side of the business adds to the friendly community environment Buker hopes to cultivate at 11th Hour.

"I wanted to have a place where somebody like me could come in and ask questions," Buker said. "I just wanted a place that was... accessible to the entire community. I guess that's really the heart."

Because it is a cannabinoid, CBD carries a certain stigma, but unlike THC products, CBD does not cause a "high." Rather, CBD taps into the body's endocannabinoid system, and many people use CBD without smoking to help manage pain, sleep better or reduce symptoms of anxiety as an alternative to prescription drugs. Along with slinging espresso and continuing to provide spa and wellness services, Buker hopes to be able to share her knowledge of CBD with the community.

> "The hardest thing in the world is getting customers to know where you're at. I'm a one woman show"

But opening in January 2021 in the thick of the pandemic brought its challenges. Unexpected plastic cup shortages, the nationwide staffing shortage and occasional customer grumbling about masking requirements have all been roadblocks along the way. These added to the existing challenges of opening a new business in a small town.

"The hardest thing in the world is getting customers to know where you're at. I'm a one woman show," Buker said.

She added that she's now more engaged with the community as a whole, compared to her previous days of only scheduled appointments.

Buker noted that the community's reception of her new business has been positive.

Despite the challenges of the spa-fé's location in Marble Works, Buker has made efforts to make 11th Hour attractive and apparent to the community, providing plenty of colorful outdoor seating to allow for safe gathering. Middlebury College students get a 10% discount if they show their student ID, and with the option to pick up a CBD-infused treat or add a few drops of tincture to their morning latte, curious customers can simply dip a toe into the world of CBD products before fully committing.

Middlebury testing and Covid-19 safety policies fall in line with other Vermont schools

By CHARLOTTE CRUTCHLOW
Contributing Writer

While Middlebury is testing less than other NESCAC schools, the college's Covid-19 prevention plan is comparable to other schools in Vermont.

Vermont college students arrived in early September eager for the start of a new academic year. Following a year and a half of limited socializing and strict safety precautions, many were more than ready for a return to pre-pandemic life. Students' expectations of this so-called "return to normalcy" remained relatively high throughout the summer as a result of increasing vaccination rates and relaxed Covid-19 restrictions across many states.

In early August, Middlebury College issued an email detailing the Covid-19 protocols for the fall 2021 semester. Although the email described the Middlebury community as "mask friendly," it did not institute any formal limits on gathering sizes or maskless interactions.

A few days later, in light of the rise in Covid-19 cases as a result of the spread of the Delta variant, a second email was circulated outlining stricter safety protocols. The second email emphasized the necessity of protecting students, faculty and staff at the college, as well as the inhabitants of the town itself. In order to achieve these goals, masks were to be worn indoors, as was the case in the fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters.

This retreat to more stringent Covid-19 restrictions paralleled a similar trend nationwide. Many colleges in the country had re-mandated masking indoors by the middle of August. At this point, Middlebury's policies were in line with the majority of these institutions.

> This retreat to more stringent Covid-19 restrictions paralleled a similar trend nationwide

Another facet of pandemic-era campus safety varies more noticeably among schools: testing policies. Although the other NESCAC schools have more robust testing plans in place than Middlebury does, Middlebury's plan remains comparable to those of other Vermont institutions.

Middlebury is the only NESCAC school not testing all students at least once per week, with most schools testing all students once or twice per week.

Only symptomatic students and unvaccinated individuals, travelers and in-season varsity athletes are being regularly tested at Middlebury. Students who feel unwell are advised to get themselves tested.

"A limited number of test slots are available for asymptomatic students each week," said Media Relations Director Sarah Ray, speaking on behalf of the Parton Center for Health and Wellness.

> "A limited number of test slots are available for asymptomatic students each

At the University of Vermont (UVM), an institution four times the size of Middlebury, tests are also available for the student body. "Fully vaccinated students may test if they wish to do so. We continue to see a relatively small number of SARS-CoV-2 cases on our campus," said Enrique Corredera, UVM Public Relations representative.

UVM has adopted Covid-19 prevention policies consistent with those enforced at Middlebury. All students, apart from those with religious or medical exemptions, were required to obtain the vaccine before returning to campus this fall. Exempt students living on campus must comply with weekly testing procedures.

The UVM community expects to continue seeing positive cases due to the Delta variant, but Corredera maintains a positive outlook on the long-term situation.

"Thankfully, we also know that vaccines remain very effective at preventing severe Covid-19," he said.

> "...we know that the best current course of action is for all students, faculty, and staff to follow the protocols in palace to prevent an outbreak"

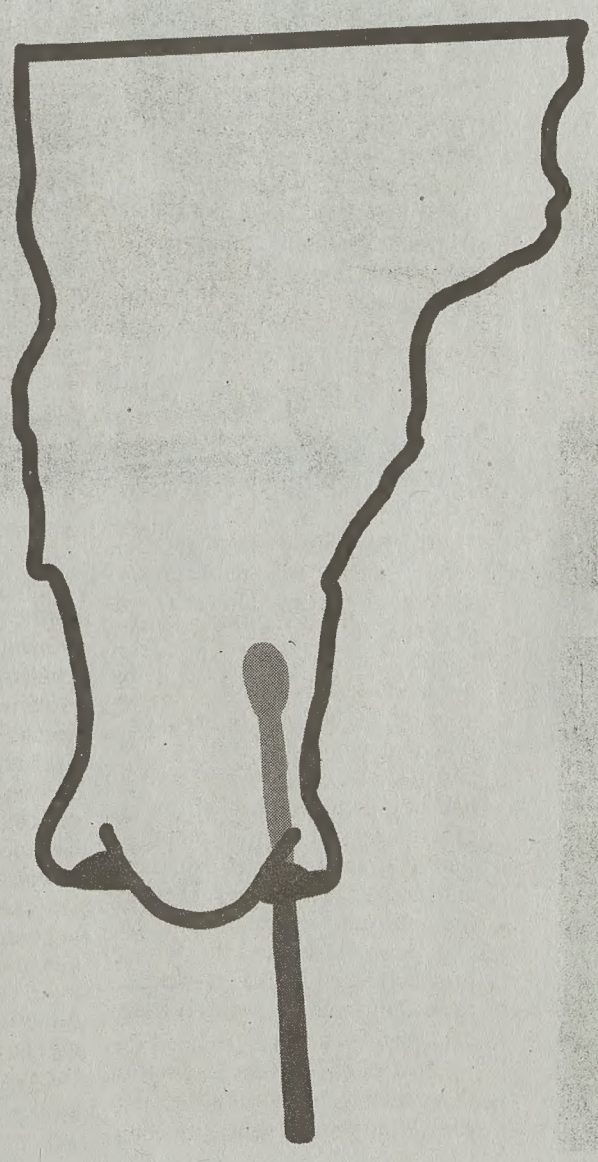
Other Vermont colleges have implemented policies analogous to those seen at Middlebury and UVM. The Covid-19 vaccine is also required at both St. Michael's college and Champlain College this fall. Similar to Middlebury, neither school is enforcing surveillance testing, although symptomatic students may request tests. Unvaccinated members of the college community must undergo periodic testing, solidifying this rule as a constant among the four institutions.

According to Ray, if Middlebury were to see an uptick in Covid-19 cases in the coming weeks, the college would respond by making adjustments to its prevention policies. The college's contingency plan accounts for the severity of the outbreak and includes the possibilities of expanding testing protocols, limiting travel to Addison County or the state of Vermont and/or implementing a campus-wide quarantine for a period of time.

"[The college is] prepared to ramp up testing even further in response to increased prevalence of Covid-19, But we know that the best current course of action is for all students, faculty and staff to follow the protocols in place to prevent an outbreak," Ray said.

A recent advisory to faculty, staff and students provided an updated set of guidelines for Covid-19 prevention this fall.

"Our focus is on prevention and asking students, staff and faculty to make decisions that help keep them and our campus community healthy," said Dr. Mark Peluso, chief health officer and college physician.



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The Middlebury Campus

To Each Their Own Balance

editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus editorial board.

SUSANNA SCHATZ

After a year and a half of quarantining, distancing and Zooming, Middlebury is beginning to again resemble what it once was, and the desire to return to a pre-pandemic campus life — pre-dispersion of friends and classmates taking semesters off or learning remotely, pre-seeing close contacts only, pre-off-campus travel restrictions — is palpable. There seems to be a shared sentiment that we all need to make up for the time and freedom we lost to Covid-19.

Super senior Febs, seniors and senior Febs are simultaneously daunted by their impending graduation date, another reminder to fill every single possible moment before running out of time. Juniors and junior febs who only had three-quarters of a year or less want to recapture the brief, "normal" college experiences they had before packing up to go home. And sophomores, who have only ever known Middlebury during the pandemic, have the same excitement, sense of wonder and pressure to have a great start to their college experience that first years have.

After so much time spent alone, it can feel like a disservice to oneself to not take advantage of every opportunity for social interaction. Plus, a desire to live life to the fullest in the wake of a huge, life-altering event (especially one that caused massive casualties) is a natural human response. Not to mention that concerns that Covid-19 could once again spike and send us back into isolation leave students wanting to make sure they aren't regretting turning down a social event when they had the chance.

These internal and external pressures to take advantage of the "return to normal" only add to preexisting societal forces that claim college needs to be the best four years of your life and to a pervasive Middlebury busyness culture.

Accordingly, for the past three-and-a-half weeks, many students have been going nonstop. This incessant "going" can manifest as sitting in the dining hall for five hours "doing work" (but really chatting), or as partying as often and as hard as possible. It can manifest as making travel plans for Fall Break despite being exhausted, or as falling victim to FOMO so hard that you attend a Flo Milli concert you know you will not enjoy — but no matter what, existing this way can only last so long before our social batteries, emotional stabilities and physical well-beings utterly deteriorate.

This editorial is meant to be a reminder that college is a lot, and that sometimes, even in this pandemic-recovery era, it is okay to just get by. Everyone needs a break at some point, and we can tell many people desperately need one right now by the amount of coughing happening in Davis.

To assuage our collective anxiety, we think it would first be helpful to confront what we have lost. As a board, we are of the opinion that it is not exactly "time" that perished; certainly, social events, academic and professional opportunities, athletic competitions and study abroad programs disappeared, but we still experienced more than a year of life. We struggled, and we also learned, grew and often made connections and memories that we may not have otherwise. Most importantly, we experienced a collective grief that cannot be swept under the rug in a quick return to pre-pandemic life.

We ask the college faculty and administration to support students in accepting the past so we can move forward more calmly. Many professors have already completely eliminated the forgiving late policies they enacted at the start of the pandemic and have overall lessened their flexibility, but we are still in a pandemic. We are still readjusting. And we are certainly still learning how to cope with our grief.

The administration should encourage continued understanding in addition to creating spaces and times for students to face and accept the stress, sadness and anxiety the pandemic produced in us.

It can be extremely difficult to remember to self-reflect and reevaluate what is really meaningful to you — but amid all the horrors of the pandemic, perhaps increased intentionality can be a silver lining.

We hope students will stop thinking of the pandemic in terms of "time lost" — which can lead to a need to temptation to ourselves into the ground — and try instead to conceptualize the pandemic as "joy lost," which might aid us in spending our time more intentionally as we work to reevaluate what brings us that joy.

So, instead of focusing on what mainstream Middlebury culture or other influences tell you the college experience "should" be, transitioning back to pre-pandemic freedom can be an opportunity to redefine what your individual, ideal college experience looks like. For some, the dream may well be sticky Atwater parties and off-campus darties; for others, making the most of Middlebury might come in the form of chill movie nights with just a couple friends or exploring the vastness of Vermont through hikes, apple picking, swimming and brewery visits.

To each their own, and that is what makes college great.

As we continue through this year, we can acknowledge the pain that comes from losing parts of the regular college experience (an experience that is, though not the last joyful part of life as lore holds, still a special and short time in our lives) in a way that does not encourage overloading ourselves. Remember to take a breath, be kind to yourself and try to rediscover balance.

The other pandemic

Op-Ed

*This letter was sent by **Jason Mittell**, professor of Film and Media Culture, on behalf of the AAUP Executive Committee and Working Conditions Committee, comprised of 20 Middlebury employees.*

Dear President Patton,

We are writing about an epidemic raging on our campus, directly impacting hundreds of students, faculty, staff and community members. It is not a virus nor a physical malady, but rather a sense of exhaustion, resignation and confusion that we see and feel each day. A year and a half of a pandemic has left many of us burnt out from a combination of overwork, grief, isolation and despair. While we looked to the return to an approximation of a "normal campus" this fall to provide respite and rejuvenation, instead this malaise seems to have deepened for many of us.

Most of the factors leading to these feelings are far beyond the control of a small college in Vermont, but one key ingredient is clearly a byproduct of choices made by our administration and Covid-19 leadership team: our shared confusion. After last academic year offered a notable success story that stood out amongst our peer institutions, achieved through a combination of diligence, planning and very good fortune, Middlebury has opted to forgo much of what made last year so successful despite the continued prevalence of Covid-19 in Vermont. And we simply do not understand why.

Unlike last year, and in contradiction to every other peer institution we know of, Middlebury has forgone comprehensive student testing this fall. It has also eliminated all on-site employee testing despite a scarcity of local testing availability (and has pushed a mail-order testing alternative that would take many days to process). We have no limits on indoor occupancy, and instead have stuffed our campus beyond the capacities of both our physical plant and the bandwidth of our overworked, under-resourced staff. We have imposed an indoor mask mandate that features major exceptions — visit any dining hall at mealtime — and seems to be unenforced beyond the immediate supervision of a classroom or work setting.

Instead, we have put all of our faith in universal vaccination to both reduce the number and severity of cases. While certainly this is the single most important action to protect both individuals and our community, it is insufficient. Many employees live with unvaccinated children, care for vulnerable elders, and/or have underlying health conditions that place them at higher risk for severe breakthrough cases. This is true for some of our students as well, as eloquently argued in a recent Campus op-ed. In short, it is quite rational to be concerned about breakthrough cases even on a fully vaccinated campus.

The best way to counter such concerns is through more information. Thus, as professionals who have dedicated our careers to expanding knowledge and deepening understanding, we are truly mystified why the college has actively chosen to know less about the status of Covid-19 on campus than we did last year. The choice to restrict testing has been justified as complying with the Vermont Department of Health (which itself is minimizing mitigations over the objections of many experts and its own staff members). A recent email has shrugged off comparisons with our peer schools as irrelevant due to different contexts in other states — despite the fact that Vermont case counts are currently higher than nearly all other states with NESCAC schools.

Thus we write to advocate that Middlebury takes simple actions to combat our lack of knowledge, all of which worked last year. Expanding broad surveillance testing would give us a true sense of Covid-19 prevalence on campus, rather than our current state where we imagine each cough or sneeze as our first glimpse of an emerging outbreak. Including employees in on-campus testing would ensure consistent access and faster results, demonstrating a concern for many of us in the community who bear the most risk. Strengthening communications to regularly present case counts and testing rates would help us know where we stand now, rather than a week ago. Promoting honesty with the community when exposures have occurred would build trust, rather than telling faculty to hide news of exposure, as recently suggested in an email and told to individual faculty members.

Would implementing these measures reduce the spread of Covid-19 on campus this fall? We honestly don't know. But would it help combat the epidemic of confusion, frustration and distrust that is currently raging across campus? Without a doubt.

Spin Doctor: Feeling Fatigued

By YARDENA CARMI
Columnist

Welcome to Spin Doctor, a bi-weekly dose of music reviews and recommendations by Yardena Carmi '23.

If one were looking for a word to sum up 2021 so far, "fatigue" would be a good candidate. It is also a fitting title for the second album from classically-trained polymath L'Rain, a New York City native and associate curator at the nonprofit arts center MoMA PS1 by day. A sonic collage of samples, field recordings, woozy compositions and wordless interludes, "Fatigue" is a contemplation of the hard work of healing and recovery in the aftermath of loss and an album I was grateful to have in my life this past summer as I was beginning my own relationship with grief.

L'Rain's experimental approach plucks sounds from across genres, creating a lush new sound to complement her surreal lyrics. At the same time, her vocal delivery and adept production wrings every drop of meaning from her words. Where words fail, she makes liberal use of noise and distortion. As album opener "Fly, Die" stutters to a start, L'Rain's voice echoes across a seemingly great distance. Punctuated with sirens and airguns, the track is a manifesto for self-confidence, protecting your time and the power of adaptation. "What have you done to change?" she asks through jarring distortions as the song winds down into the next track, "Find It."

Here is where the melodic side of L'Rain's songwriting is revealed. "Find It" is a gentle groove that has the listener chasing the singer's thoughts as they float over crisp drums and distant vocal harmonies. She introduces the album's main throughline, the loss of her mother Lorraine, who inspired her stage name, in 2017. A swelling horn line builds to a cathartic blare of organs and snippets of a preacher speaking, a recording of a friend's funeral taken by the artist.

"Fatigue" is a sonic landscape in which joy and sorrow are two sides of the same coin, and its subject matter ranges from the depths of grief to exuberant, life-affirming moments.

"Fatigue" is a sonic landscape in which joy and sorrow are two sides of the same coin, and its subject matter ranges from the depths of grief to exuberant, life-affirming moments. Interludes like "Black Clap" and "Love Her" are less-so compositions than documentation of the people, spaces and histories that hold meaning for the artist. L'Rain's democratic approach to art layers studio sound with at-home recordings and voice memos, medium and audio quality itself becoming more tools with which to texture her songs.

This unique musical approach is exemplified on album standout "Blame Me." L'Rain's voice and plucked guitar are deceptively simple against a dense mat of synths, distortion and background vocals; the track is underlaid by a barely-perceptible recording of her mother's voice. Dealing directly with her late mother's illness, the repeated lyrical phrase "You were wasting away, my god / I'm making my way down south" rings in my mind for hours after every time I hear it.

Pia Contreras

While a good portion of "Fatigue" is not exactly easy listening, compositionally or emotionally, the songs at the album's core go hard. Jazz-infused "Suck Teeth" is chill and spacey, impossible not to bob your head along to, even as its lyrics explore the musician's anxieties about motherhood. Mid-album highlight "Kill Self" couches the intensity of its sentiment in a pulsing club beat as L'Rain sings in off-kilter harmony with herself. While the song is about cyclical self doubt and being your own worst enemy, it also anticipates and embraces the inevitability of recovery as part of those cycles. Sonically, it gives me the feeling of flies circling my head, in the best way. L'Rain's double-tracked vocals shine further on "Two Face," a piano-driven meditation on loneliness.

Through music that is by turns dense and sparse, claustrophobic and expansive, L'Rain crafts a moving account of life after loss and a deeply introspective look at personal growth and change.

The last words of "Fatigue" are "I am not prepared for what is going to happen to me," a statement loaded with fear and uncertainty. At the same time, the way L'Rain sings it is a near-ecstatic embrace of the unknown. Through music that is by turns dense and sparse, claustrophobic and expansive, L'Rain crafts a moving account of life after loss and a deeply introspective look at personal growth and change.

Reel Critic: "Transition"

By SARTAJ SINGH
Contributing Writer

Sas Carey's "Transition," the latest showing in Middlebury's Hirschfield International Film Series, is a documentary that details the intense urbanization that Mongolia has experienced through the story of a mother and daughter and their journey from the countryside of Mongolia to its capital city Ulaanbaatar.

Carey has been traveling to Mongolia for about 20 years, and because of her relationship with the place and culture, she has dedicated herself to telling the story of Mongolia through four films ("Transition" being the fourth). This installment paints a detailed picture of the state of urbanization in Mongolia right now.

"Transition" documents the journey of Khongoroo, a doctor working in Ulaanbaatar who returns to the countryside to be with her daughter and family. In the country, people live a vastly different lifestyle than in the capital. They tend livestock, work in the fields and live in yurts. The film captures the beautiful landscape of the farmland, full of greenery, with a close community of families living, laughing and working together. It is in this remote land of East Taiga where these relationships, specifically between Khongoroo and her daughter, develop, painting a beautiful portrait of motherhood and family. There is a love between them and the rest of the group that cannot be easily expressed through words, but Carey is able to capture it instead through film. In one such moment, as Khongoroo picks her daughter up and wraps her in a big hug, the audience can feel the pure joy of their reunion. It is a heartwarming moment that Carey caught artfully, and it speaks volumes about the close relationship she holds with the East Taigans that she was able to access such an emotional and personal moment.

However, the core of this film is to show the titular transition that Mongolia is going through. We see the modernization of Mongolia through city life. With loud noises in the streets and masses of people flowing through the twists and turns of the metropolis, our first impression of Mongolia is one of activity and momentum. Then, as Khongoroo travels to the countryside, we see a completely different way of life.

However, this contrast was not always so dramatic. A hundred years ago, more Mongolians were nomads living in remote areas, doing the type of work that we see the nomads doing in the film, and building the relationships that are so heartwarming to watch on screen. Now, though, the majority of Mongolians live in cities, and that is eventually where Khongoroo returns, with her daughter by her side, as they reunite with the daughter's father. However, even as the cultures change from vibrant and fast-moving to serene and uncomplicated, the tone of the movie doesn't change. It remains personal, perhaps because the subject of the movie is Khongoroo, someone with a calm and caring temperament, and we see the world through her eyes.

"Transition" conveys lots about Mongolia and its ongoing cultural shift over the past century by diving deep into the lifestyles that were once the norm but are now often obsolete, and the effects of such a drastic transformation, through the eyes of people who are closely affected by it. By seeing Khongoroo and her family's journey up close, we gain a greater perspective on the gravity of the change Mongolia is undergoing. Carey has effectively documented the transition from a nomadic lifestyle to modern city living in a personal, emotional and beautifully shot form.

Courtesy Photo

New faculty comment on move to Middlebury, return to in-person teaching

By RAIN JI
Arts & Culture Editor

Assistant Professor of Black Studies Viola Huang, teaching African American Activism in Education and Beginning German this semester, missed the new faculty group photo because she arrived at the Middlebury campus only a week before classes started. She moved from Passau, Germany to Vermont after finishing her degree at Columbia University and completing post-doc work at University of Passau.

Her travels were largely disrupted by the new restrictions in place because of Covid-19. Indeed, beginning a teaching career at the college in the middle of a global pandemic has been a challenge for many. This fall, Middlebury welcomes nine new tenure-track professors and 44 new faculty in total.

Huang was attracted to the college because she wanted to apply for teaching-focused institutions so she could work closely with a diverse group of students. Despite roadblocks on her way to the campus, she felt supported by her colleagues in the Black Studies Department, the German Department and by other administrative staff.

Huang has not taught any in-person class for the past one and a half years.

"I have lost out on many of the most rewarding aspects of my job over the past semesters: I have never met my recent students except on Zoom and missed sending those off that graduated," she said.

The Arabic Teaching Assistant Maryait Khader said that teaching a language in a pandemic is a strange experience. Specifically, she finds it difficult because of masks.

"Sometimes you need [the students] to focus on the letters, so ideally you could show your mouth to your students," she said.

On the other hand, she also thinks that people have learned how to be more forgiving and have more patience for each other since Covid-19. Khader was happy to see students working diligently amid fast-paced changes.

"People are always smiling and give me a lot of good energy," she said.

Khader holds a master's degree from the University of Jordan. She came to the college leaving two young children in Amman. On campus, she works with Arabic language students and professors to foster an Arabic learning community. Living at the Arabic House, she offers a variety of culture lessons for interested students.

Khader found out about Middlebury College by chance from a friend, and she is most excited about the nature in Vermont. "Nature is fabulous here, although at the same time, I'm a bit worried about the snow," Khader said.

Similar to Khader's experience, Assistant Professor of Studio Art Matthew Schrader, formerly a faculty member at the Milton Avery Graduate School of Arts at Bard College, felt incredibly welcomed by the area as he went for hikes, shopped at farmer's markets and explored local food. He arrived in August from New York City and found the specificity of his new position unique as it reflects his life experience as an artist over the last decade. This fall, he is teaching a cross-listed course between the Studio Art Department and Black Studies Department titled Spacing. Students meet twice a week to explore the built environment through the lenses of race, class and gender.

In contrast to Professor Schrader's drastic change of scenery, Assistant Professor of Biology and Global Health Sam Byrne comes to the college from St. Lawrence University, located in one of the most rural areas of New York State. Because of that, he felt that there wasn't much of a transition.

"I love rock climbing, foraging for mushrooms, fishing, gardening and many other outdoor activities, so I am happy to be in an area that provides great opportunities to be outside," said Byrne.

This term is Byrne's second time teaching an epidemiology course during a pandemic, and it is equally interesting and challenging for him. "Public health is a field defined by difficult problems that require deeply interdisciplinary answers, so public health education is a perfect fit for a liberal arts institution like Middlebury," Byrne said.

Most of his research is focused on the health effects of persistent organic pollutants among Alaska Natives. He thinks that community-minded epidemiology can be used to benefit people experiencing environmental injustice, and to meaningfully impact policy to prevent future injustice. According to him, in the Covid-19 context, there has been a radical shift in the culture of health behavior that really emphasizes personal reasonability.

Byrne said that he tends to not explicitly discuss Covid-19 as an example in class because it remains raw for many people. "It isn't easy to focus on learning if your thoughts are pulled away by real personal concerns and losses," he said.

Like many of the other new faculty this year, Byrne is excited to return to in-person teaching.

"Part of what I love about residential liberal arts institutions is the concerted effort at community building," Byrne said.

SABRINA TEMPLETON

College museum adds new protest art exhibit

By ORLY BERKE
Contributing Writer

After seeing "An Incomplete History of Protest," an exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Middlebury's Chief Curator & Director of Engagement Jason Vrooman began thinking about curating an exhibition surrounding Protest Art in the Middlebury Museum of Art.

Unfortunately, 2020 became a year of lost time, with the Covid-19 pandemic temporarily closing the college museum and sending most of the college's students and faculty away from campus. But the museum's staff decided to take advantage of this period to rethink certain aspects of the museum, including reorganizing the permanent galleries with the goals of greater accessibility and inclusivity in mind.

Staff redoubled their efforts to hollow out a permanent installation in the museum for "Art and Activism" in light of the Black Lives Matter and racial justice protests of summer 2020.

"There were so many more amazing stories of artistic protest that we could have told, and so many great works that remained in storage, that I knew I wanted to curate a larger show," Vrooman said in an email to The Campus.

With the museum reopening as well as Middlebury College returning to majority in-person learning this fall, Vrooman and the staff felt that an exhibition of activist art was pertinent.

"Middlebury's art museum is a place where anyone can come to learn about the past, contemplate our current moment, and think about how we [move] forward together as a society," Vrooman said.

Planning began in spring 2021 and continued into the summer, with many meetings surrounding the complications that can arise when working on such a multi-faceted project.

Another contributor to the project was Co-Curator María Ramirez '21, who brought her personal experiences surrounding how people of color are viewed in museums and how she wanted to make the museum accessible.

She began by asking the question, "who will this reach and how will it affect them?" Thanks to some of the museum's grant money, Ramirez and Vrooman worked together, purposefully looking to acquire new works by women or artists of color.

The museum also enlisted the help of their summer interns to take part in discussions surrounding the works and engage in conversations with multiple artists in the gallery about their pieces and what it means to decolonize a museum. Florence Wu '22 focused on the photojournalism aspect of the exhibit, researching different information surrounding the photographs in the museum as well as writing some of the labels.

"I see photojournalism as having a lot of hit or miss potential. It's not very long lasting. You look at some photojournalists and it's just one photograph that defined their career," Wu said.

The power of art in creating a movement is what helped spark Visiting Assistant Professor of Art History and Architecture Sarah Rogers' love for the exhibit.

"Art has a way of drawing us in so that we can become more contemplative of socio-political issues," Rogers said.

In the spring of 2021, she began forming a plan to offer an Art and Protest class for the upcoming fall semester. When Vrooman caught wind of this, the two decided to work together.

Vrooman talked to faculty to see what images would most benefit students' learning, while Rogers started relating sections of her syllabus to works in the exhibit. Rather than taking a chronological approach, she decided to organize the syllabus around different strategies one may use in protest art: caricature, art in museums versus street art, bodily insertions and more. This allowed for students to better see the impact and limits that protest art has on an audience, while also enabling them to become better participants in the world regarding socio-cultural problems.

According to Rogers, this iteration of the course will likely only be offered this semester. In its place, Rogers is planning to offer a related class either on the refugee crisis and the push to decolonize museums or one focused on a specific issue in protest art next semester.

The "Art and Protest" exhibit is only on display until mid-December. Usually only six to eight temporary exhibitions are displayed in the museum, along with the permanent collection works.

"Art & Protest: Artists as Agents of Social Change" is open from Sept. 14 to Dec. 12, 2021, and reservations are required. To reserve a spot, visit: go.middlebury.edu/museumvisit/

Editor's Note: Florence Wu is a Local Editor for The Campus.

COURTESY PHOTO

'Makerspace' for Sewing and Sustainable Fashion unveiled

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received from staff members at the Innovation Hub, Grazioso was guided by the experiences of Kelly Hickey, a Middlebury resident and owner of Edie & Glo, a line of reused textiles and clothing.

"Molly approached me about her idea of opening a repurposing lab," Hickey said. "I definitely supported it because I feel that people need to have hands-on experience to understand the problem [with the fast-fashion industry]."

Hickey advised Grazioso on the necessary supplies and best fabric sources for upcycling.

Grazioso also recently brought on seven student-volunteer monitors, who will supervise The Studio. Emma Barrett '24.5 said they were drawn to being a monitor for the opportunity to both work on their own personal sewing projects and help other people with projects.

"I really like doing sewing-related projects," Barrett said. "There's not really a space for that here, so when I heard about the studio, I thought that was perfect."

> "I really like doing sewing-related projects. There's not really a space for that here, so when I heard about the studio, I thought that was perfect."

Megan Mahoney '22.5, another monitor, said she is looking forward to meeting other students who also have an interest in sewing. "Molly has put so much work into [The Studio], and it's such a cool space to have for students because there really isn't anything like it," Mahoney said.

One monitor will be present in The Studio at all times, and two students can work in the space at once. Students can book the space using the link in The Studio's Instagram biography: @studioatmidd.

The space's current hours are 7-9 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Thursday; 3-5 p.m. Friday; and 12-2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The Annex also houses the Tea Club and the ceramics studio, so The Studio is not open on Tuesdays because of the Tea Club's meeting.

Grazioso said she was pleasantly surprised by the overwhelmingly positive feedback she has received about the make space over the past few months since she announced its opening on Instagram at the end of June.

"My very long-term goal is that in the future I could get a new space, because I was kind of overwhelmed this summer by positive feedback and demand for this space," she said. "I'm not sure if this space is effectively going to meet the needs or wants of so many students who are interested."

Though it has been a demanding process to prepare the space for students, Grazioso said she feels a lot of excitement and relief now that it is open. "A lot of times it's really easy to have an idea for something, but that follow-through is always really hard to achieve. It feels so real now that students can come into [the space]," she said.

While her enthusiasm and passion for a space on campus for students to pursue sewing and slow-fashion projects has not waned, Grazioso clarified that The Studio is not an all-encompassing solution to the issues with the fast-fashion industry.

"[The Studio is] a way to start the conversation about sustainability and fashion, but ultimately, I think that actual policy change and change within the fashion industry is necessary to combat the damaging effects of the fast-fashion industry," she said.

Daleelah Saleh/The Middlebury Campus

Though The Studio is currently open, Grazioso said "slow fashion projects" are the easiest to work on for the time being.

Empty rooms in special interest houses added to August room draw

Continued from Page 1

after moving in.

"I suppose it makes [our experience] a bit different, but I don't think it makes the sense of community any worse," Traw said. When she bumps into others in the morning or late at night, she is happy to chat with the non-speakers in English.

Sam Roubin '23.5, a non-Arabic speaker, chose one of the few remaining doubles on campus with his friend in the August housing draw. As the portal displayed the house name as "Sperry," he only realized he was in the Arabic House when he searched for it afterwards.

Currently, the Arabic House holds at least one event per week, such as cooking traditional Arabic dishes and watching Arabic movies. Students from different courses come over, and the non-speaker residents are always welcome to join. Roubin likes the homey feeling of the house compared to regular dorms, and the Arabic teaching assistant has been teaching him simple Arabic words.

Although not involved in the room draw, the Wellness House located on Weybridge Street also felt the pressure from the housing crisis. Supported by the office of Health and Wellness Education, the house is designed to encourage individual and collective well-being and substance-free or low-substance use behavior. To apply, students must submit an application and attend an interview.

Ansen Gong '23, who was remote during spring 2021, admitted that he applied for the Wellness House to avoid off-campus housing at Bread Loaf — the only regular housing option left when he logged onto the portal at 4:00 a.m. in China for his lottery draw.

> "I suppose it makes [our experience] a bit different, but I don't think it makes the sense of community any worse."

He guesses that about half the residents came to Wellness for similar reasons, but he does enjoy living with everyone else in this small community with their own kitchen and laundry.

"If you want a quiet place to live, [Wellness] is pretty nice," Gong said.

On the other hand, Sophia Wittig '24 applied for Wellness because she could not get a space in Bread Loaf, which is only open to juniors and seniors. "I specifically asked to go to Bread Loaf for the financial discount, but [the school] wanted us to have the on-campus experience that we missed last year," Wittig said. She knows that many sophomores have the same financial concern and would gladly live at Bread Loaf if it were allowed.

Regardless of their reason for choosing Wellness, Wittig said that students have remained substance-free at the house and respected the quiet hours the residents decided upon. However, a common pursuit of wellness does not seem visible.

"We have community expectations pasted on the wall," Wittig said. "We're supposed to have house dinners once a month, but that hasn't happened."

"We understand that it is not ideal to have a student(s) living in an interest house without that specific interest," Place said. "If students are having concerns we'd encourage them to connect with their Community Assistant, the house contacts or our office directly so we can offer support."

DON'T MISS THIS

Cocoon — "Rebuilding"

Inspired by the popular storytelling phenomenon "The Moth", Cocoon is a special evening of true stories told live. This year's edition, on the theme of "Rebuilding," will feature six storytellers: Middlebury students Keziah Wilde '24 and Luna Simone-Gonzalez '24, Middlebury staff members Janae Due, Scott Barnicle, and Steve Zatarain '15, and community member and journalist Christopher Ross. Middlebury Moth-Up producers Alexandra Burns '21.5 and Kristen Morgenstern '24 will host; music by Robison Hall Technical Director Mark Christensen.

Friday, October 8 at 8 p.m. at the Mahaney Arts Center's Robison Hall, and online. Tickets starting at $5.

First Year Show — "Which Way is Up?!"

The Theatre Department's 26th Annual First Year Show features selected works from Pulitzer Prize winner Suzan-Lori Parks' "365 Days/365 Plays." Each short play has its own storyline, but is connected through similar themes of love, politics, and the pursuit of human connection.

Thu. 10/7-Sat. 10/9 at 7:30 p.m., plus 10:00 p.m. on Fri. 10/8 only, at the Hepburn Zoo. Tickets: $5.

Doric String Quartet; Jonathan Biss, Piano

Pre-Concert Lecture by Professor of Music Larry Hamberlin

This powerhouse evening of chamber music features "one of the best young string quartets" (Gramophone) playing works by Beethoven and Bartók, then joining with acclaimed pianist Jonathan Biss for Elgar's Piano Quintet in A Major.

Sat. 10/9 at 7:30 p.m. at the MAC and online. Tickets starting at $5.
Pre-Concert Lecture at 6:30 p.m. in MAC room 125. Free.

All events are open to on- and off-campus audiences. Vaccinations (or valid medical or religious exemptions) and masks required.

When in Rome, give it a swing

By CAPTAIN RUDOLPH
Contributing Writer

After success in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) New England Championship, three Middlebury men's tennis players are headed to Rome, Georgia on October 14 to represent the Panthers in the ITA Cup.

At the ITA regional tournament, Aidan Harris '23 and Noah Laber '24 won the doubles championship, while Stan Morris '22 was runner up in the singles championship.

Morris advanced to the finals of singles play in the ITA cup in 2019.

"It was an awesome privilege to compete for a national title my sophomore year," Morris said. "Hopefully I can use that experience to raise my level over the course of the tournament."

The ITA Cup consists of regional champions and runner-ups from other ITA regional tournaments across the country. With everyone in Rome looking to make deep runs in the tournament, the Middlebury athletes will be arriving ready to give the tournament their all.

"I'm super excited to be able to play against the best teams in the country," Laber said. "I feel the ITA Regionals gave us the confidence to play better than we ever have before."

Morris is not the only Panther making the trip to Georgia with experience in the ITA Cup. Head Coach Andrew Thomson '10 won the ITA Cup in 2007 and 2009 in doubles play.

Thomson has been encouraging his players to focus on effort, not results.

"Coach Thomson is a very engaged coach who cares a lot about everyone's progress. In doubles particularly, he is all about taking control of points at the net," Harris said.

"While Noah and I aren't typically seeking to come to the net in singles, Coach Thomson makes sure we are moving around a lot at the net and trying to go hunt balls as much as we can. His coaching really helped us in our run to the title at the regional tournament."

While Harris, Laber and Morris head down to Georgia with Coach Thomson, the rest of the team will be playing in the Wesleyan Invitational on October 16 and 17.

From October 14–17, Harris, Laber and Morris will be taking to the courts to see if they can become the next Panthers to win a national championship. Just by making the tournament they've established themselves as All-Americans. The players and coaches are avoiding stress and looking at this event as an exciting opportunity to do something big.

"It's a fun thing," Coach Hansen says of the upcoming ITA Cup. "Give it a swing!"

COURTESY OF AIDAN HARRIS

Aidan Harris '23 (left) and Noah Laber '24 (right) pose with their trophies after winning the Division III ITA New England Region men's doubles competition.

Stan Morris '22 is headed to Rome, Georgia, after finishing second in the Division III ITA New England Region men's singles championship.

COURTESY OF COLIN BOURQUE

Following years of work, Middlebury Club Soccer finally takes to the field

One branch of Middlebury Club Soccer is the men's travel team (pictured above), which plays in the Region I Club Soccer League.

Courtesy of Johnny LaFortune

By CHARLES CROUNSE
Staff Writer

The men's and women's varsity soccer teams are no longer the only Panthers on the soccer pitch. As of this fall, Middlebury now has a fully operational men's club team.

Founded by Blaise Siefer '23.5 and Marco Fengler '23, the club took to the field for the first time this fall, but it has been in the works for many months.

Fengler said the process of getting the team off the ground began two years ago, when he and Siefer first arrived on campus and the college had recently cut its junior varsity men's team.

But even though the program was gone, interest in soccer remained high.

"We had a lot of guys interested in soccer, but we lacked organization and infrastructure," Fengler recalled.

Seeking to create a more structured program, Fengler and Siefer reached out to the Middlebury Director of Club Sports Doug Connolly. Although he supported the vision for the club, he explained that there were still many obstacles, some of which included medical supervision, budgetary restrictions and field time.

Just as things looked like they were finally starting to get going, the Covid-19 pandemic brought club soccer to a screeching halt.

"It was tough," Fengler explained. "We got sent home in the spring, and in the fall we realized the school had a lot going on, so it wasn't the right time."

Not to be deterred, the pair continued to operate behind the scenes throughout the spring semester of 2021. After long talks with the Student Activities Office, they finally got the green light in May.

"We still had a lot to do," said Fengler, "but we knew we finally had a team."

The team took its fully fledged form this fall, donning navy and white jerseys on the pitch. Led by Fengler and Siefer as co-presidents, the club now has a full executive board, consisting of three class captains (Otis Miliken '24, Ben Knudsen '23, Hugo Bocker '22), the two aforementioned presidents, and social chair Captain Rudolph '23.5. The team consists of a 27-man travel roster that practices regularly and plays games at other schools in addition to a practice squad that trains several times per week as well.

"There is fluidity between the two [the travel roster and the practice squad], however," Fengler explained. "If guys are working hard in practice, then they can potentially make the travel team."

The team has been in fine form on the field, getting off to an unbeaten start to the season. Following a statement victory over UVM's club side in their season opener, the team played to a hard-fought draw against Clarkson before earning back to back victories against University of Massachusetts Lowell and Brandeis. The team is currently listed as a provisional outfit for this season, so they will not be allowed to compete at regionals, but they have big goals for the year nonetheless.

"We want to have an unbeaten season," Fengler said. "We play a fast-paced yet composed game, so fans can expect a lot of goals too."

Fans of the team can find the club's schedule on the team's Instagram page as well as on the club's page on Presence. Middlebury club soccer takes on UVM B and Dartmouth B this weekend.

Editor's Note: Blaise Siefer is the Senior Sports Editor for The Campus.

Courtesy of Alex Stimpson

Co-presidents Blaise Siefer '23.5 (left) and Marco Fengler '23 (right) post after the team's 2-1 victory over UVM on Sunday, September 19.

Women's club rugby relishes return to competition

By JOSH ROSENSTEIN
Staff Writer

In light of the abundance of talent on the team, it may come as a surprise that no one on the women's rugby club (MCWRC) team played rugby before joining MCWRC.

A significant portion of credit is owed to the team's legendary coach, K.O. Onufry. One of the founding members of Boston's Beantown Rugby Club, Onufry has worked at Middlebury for 21 years.

"She's really a central part of the team," MCWRC president Lily Shannon '23 said. "You can tell how much she cares about each and every one of us."

MCWRC (1–1) is now two games into their fall season. On Saturday, Sept. 25, the Panthers defeated Southern Connecticut State University, 22–0. Last Saturday, they traveled to Bowdoin College, falling 27–17.

Many MCWRC members — including students from the class of 2024 and 2024.5 — are playing in games for the first time in their Middlebury career. Last season, due to the pandemic, the team didn't play in games, and couldn't have full-contact practices. Instead, they focused on purely tactical and skill work.

The Panthers play in Rugby Northeast and under USA Rugby, so most of their matches are against other NESCAC schools or smaller New England universities. The team also has expectations of qualifying for playoffs this year, which have tentative dates of Nov. 6 and 13.

One pillar of MCWRC is its inclusivity and camaraderie — the team is very accepting of all players, no matter their prior experience.

"The team culture is so good," Elizabeth Austin '24 said. "It's a very open community, very non-judgemental, and [supportive] no matter your skill level."

The Panthers are back in action on Oct. 9, when they host St. Michael's College. You can stay up to date with MCWRC by following them on Instagram.

Courtesy of Chris Johnson

Women's rugby battles Southern Connecticut University on Saturday, September 25.

Women's rugby poses for a picture after beating Southern Connecticut University, 22–0, in their home opener on Saturday, September 25.

Courtesy of Chris Johnson

Honey and Harvest at the Knoll

The pizza oven.

Chopped-up purple carrots.

Continued from Page 4

Chief Stevens holding a frame drum.

In the afternoon, Chief Don Stevens of the Nulhegan band of the Coosuk Abenaki nation visited to share his wisdom on agriculture and food. The Chief has visited and maintained a sustained relationship with the farm since 2019. Before the event, he sang a calling-in song and played the frame drum, which is used to release spirits for guardianship and guidance.

We shucked beans as he told us stories of the "Corn Mother." The farm was quiet except for the sound of beans falling in plastic buckets and Chief Stevens' booming voice between the rustling crops.

According to the "Corn Mother" story, the first mother had to watch her children go hungry daily as food was scarce and they sustained themselves through a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. Finally, unable to bear watching her children go hungry anymore, the mother decided to go to the Creator and offered her life in exchange for food. The Creator accepted, and she was transformed into corn, the crop that still feeds her children today.

"We are all related, including these beans," said Chief Stevens. "Some people say well then you are eating your relatives, but didn't you feed from your mother's breasts? Isn't the Earth mother also a mother? Our ancestors made themselves into food to feed us. That is why I have a deep respect for the thousands of people before me that passed [the seeds] on to feed me, and I will pass it on so it can feed people after me."

These stories connect ancestral lineage with the land and the food. To eat is to be intertwined physically with the land, and to till the land is to pass on the lineage and custody to your children.

As the sun began to make its way towards distant hills, Knoll interns Andrés, Isabela and Tashi prepared the pizzas, and a student band arrived to play their guitars by the firepit. The sky was once again a mixture of purple-ish pink and blue characteristic of Middlebury's sunsets and in the distance, a few figures were making their way over for evening events or finishing up their afternoon run.

Sitting across from me, Megan compared the farm on which the students harvest, garden or relax to a "palimpsest," a manuscript from which the original writings are erased to make room for later ones but whose effaced print nevertheless remains in traces. At times, our individual efforts and traces also remain with the land and thread us together to people that came before us and those who will come after.

"The farm sites the students to the land, and all the history and relations that comes with it," Megan said. She picked several flowers from the garden for her friend, and offered one to me.

Kayley, a student from the class, holding the purple carrots they harvested.

Harvested corn.

One of the many buckets of the skunk beans we peeled.

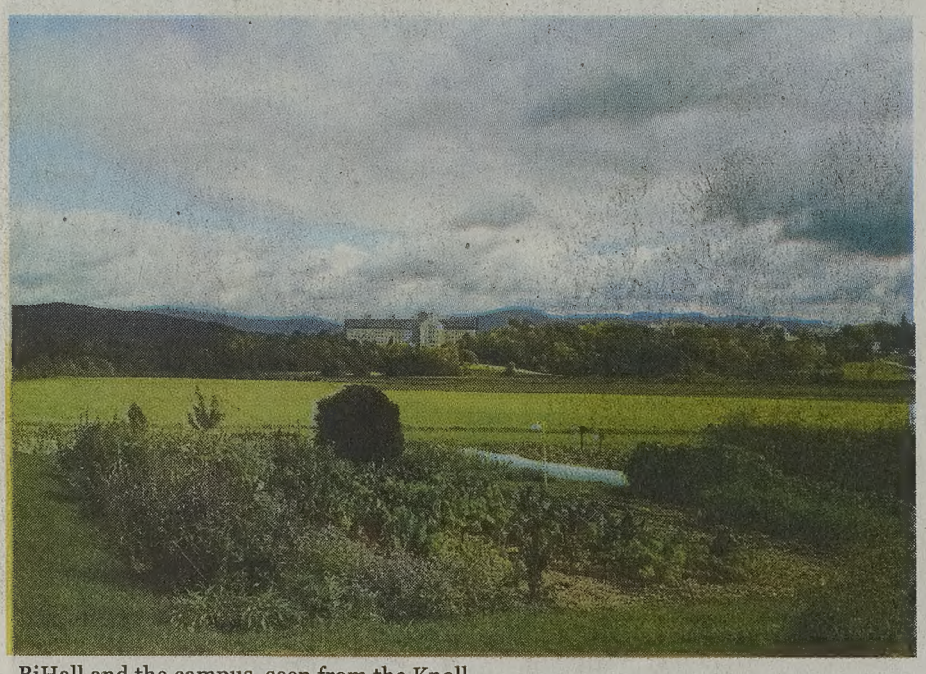
The bare corn cobs.

The shells of the skunk beans we peeled.

The morning's harvest.

Megan and Jay examining the soil and the weeds.

A label marking out the soil for the carrot experiment.



BiHall and the campus, seen from the Knoll.

Harvested onions inside the shed.